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RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 3404  
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 0249  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0610  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2564  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEHDS/USMISSION USAU ADDIS ABABA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000068

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR BWALCH  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR MGAVIN  
USAID FOR JHARMON AND ELOKEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/01/2020

TAGS: [EAID PHUM PREL ZI](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH WFP REPRESENTATIVE TO  
ZIMBABWE

Classified By: Ambassador Charles A. Ray for reasons 1.4 (b) (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The WFP experienced a decline in the number of people receiving food aid in Zimbabwe in 2009, but expects to see an increase in 2010 because of drought conditions. The WFP Director also worries about post-World Cup conditions when xenophobic actions against Zimbabweans in South Africa could generate a reverse flow of Zimbabweans. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Ambassador met with World Food Program (WFP) Country Director and Representative Felix M. Bamezon at his office on January 28. A native of Togo, Bamezon served in Chad, the DRC, WFP's U.S. office, and WFP headquarters before coming to Zimbabwe just under a year ago.

¶3. (U) Bamezon said that in 2009, WFP provided food aid to 5 million Zimbabweans. Aid is currently being provided to only 1.4 million, but he expects a sharp increase because of the drought and the affect it will have on the maize crop. He is already seeing increases in people requesting aid. He also worries that after the World Cup concludes there will be a xenophobic backlash against Zimbabweans in South Africa, which could cause a reverse flow of Zimbabweans that will affect the numbers of people in need of food assistance. (NOTE: USG support accounted for approximately 62 percent of WFP's 2009 feeding programs. END NOTE.)

¶4. (U) According to Bamezon, ZANU-PF ministers and MPs have often tried to influence delivery of food as a way to reward party supporters and punish opponents, but WFP has resisted their efforts. Grudgingly, ZANU-PF has allowed the program to continue. MDC officials, even though they recognize that food delivery to rural areas can influence voting patterns, have resisted the temptation to interfere, and simply monitor where the food goes.

¶5. (C) Corruption in Zimbabwe is endemic, Bamezon said. When the Zimbabwe Defense Force (ZDF) was deployed to the DRC, units engaged openly in smuggling from their area of operation. He said it was clear to him when he was serving in the DRC as WFP country director that ZDF corruption occurred with the complicity of the DRC leadership, and appeared to be on orders from higher-ups in ZDF or the Government of Zimbabwe. When the ZDF redeployed to Zimbabwe, however, the smuggling stopped, unlike with Rwandan forces who continue to smuggle from their former area of operations through proxies. The Zimbabwean corruption, said Bamezon, is

less blatant than some other countries in the region, like the DRC. DRC officials abroad have no "sense of honor" he said. When he was WFP country director in Chad, for instance, the DRC ambassador there approached him and asked for several hundred thousand dollars to "pay his staff." After Bamezon informed him that he could not do this, the man never spoke to him again.

¶16. (U) One of the unique things Bamezon notices about Zimbabwe is that the country has retained the laws and regulations of both the British colonial and the Ian Smith regimes. "They have a law regulating nearly everything," he said. While these laws don't seem to be applied to the very top people, those below the top know that almost anything they do can be prosecuted if someone takes a mind to do it.

¶17. (C) Bamezon said that although WFP has not been involved with the Malawians in Zimbabwe as a distinct group, he is aware of their plight and the negative potential of the large number here that are stateless. ZANU-PF punishes them, he said, because they are seen as collaborators with the white farmers and former colonial masters. The GOZ routinely refuses to allow them to be registered for food aid and denies them identification documents. This is also, he said, out of fear that with documents they will be able to vote and will swell the roles of opposition voters. It is strange, he mused, that the Zimbabweans would so maltreat these people when they protest so vehemently about South African treatment of the illegal and legal Zimbabweans in their midst.

¶18. (C) BIO NOTE: Bamezon is a low key, but forceful

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international organization representative, who tries to maintain an even-handed approach to the government here. His wife and children are U.S. citizens who live in New Rochelle, NY, and he plans to retire there after this tour of duty.  
END BIO NOTE.

RAY